

# THE LEGEND OF BLUE SPRING

By JUDGE FRANCIS B. CARTER.

A Beautiful Story  
of One of the Most  
Charming Spots in  
Florida.

In 1853, "Marcus Warland, or the Long Moss Spring," a fascinating story by Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz, a gifted Southern writer, was given to the public. The fountain head of Spring Creek, then and now commonly known as "Blue Spring," was re-characterized by the hero of that story, and it became famous in romance and action as "The Long Moss Spring." The description found in the book named above is so graphic and complete that a matter-of-fact lawyer, accustomed to dry, logical and exact, even, if not always credible, statements, can not hope to improve upon nor add to it. The icy waters rush frantically from the snow white mouth of a limestone cavern, thirty feet below the top of a green hill, situated about six miles from Marianna. So clear and cold are they that one is tempted to believe they are distilled and held in cold storage, in nature's reservoir, on their way to the surface. The hillside is covered with velvet grass and huge ferns, with here and there a holly, a magnolia or an immense muscadine vine. The hillside with its vines and trees weighted with tons of gray moss, forms a most appropriate setting for this jewel of nature.

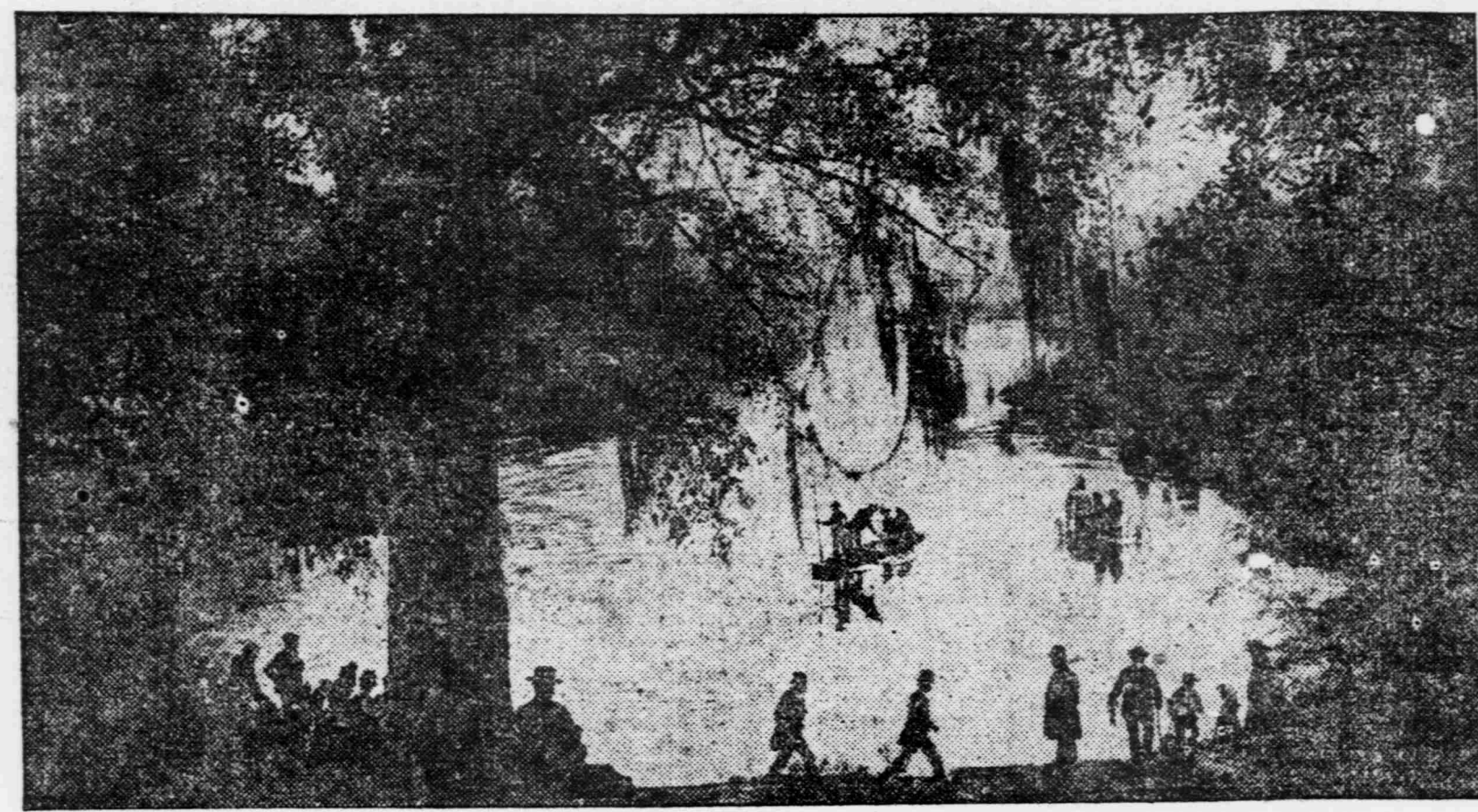
## A Lover's Retreat.

Under the branches of the trees, protected by the leaves and the moss from the sunshine and the rain, gay picnickers congregate, and delightful fish fries are had, while from the hillside, on moonlight evenings, hidden from prying eyes, gazing into the placid but beautiful waters below, lovers gather inspiration to tell the old, old story, and returning, at the midnight hour, wear crowns of moss, in token of love's triumph.

Moss covers the sides of the spring and the bottom of the stream below; moss, not related to that which grows upon the trees, but long and round, green in the sunshine, blue in the shadow; in the current, animated, graceful, proud, beautiful, extending its long arms, advancing here, receding there, now rising to the surface, now sinking to the bottom, now waving fantastically, now resting peacefully, but merely for a moment; in the eddies dull, inert, ugly, apparently lifeless; while the crystal water flows swiftly but silently, with scarcely a ripple or a murmur.

## A Dark Deed.

Fishes rising to the surface lie still a moment, then, head downward, force themselves into the icy depths again. Fishes dart hither and thither, in the stream below, playing in the current, resting in the shadows, chasing one another. Woe to the perch that dares play with the trout. A splash is heard, a sudden churning of the water is seen; the spray glitters in the sunshine; then, silence. It was only a moment; too short for the mind to realize the consequences of this sud-



Picnic Scene at Beautiful "Long Moss," or Blue Springs, Near Marianna, Florida.

den and rude disturbance of tranquility; but in that short period a violent and bloody deed was done, and the great brutal trout extinguished the life of the innocent little perch.

The spring is the principal source of supply for a stream flowing into Chipola river, about nine miles long, fifty to two hundred yards wide, one to ten feet deep. In these waters are found the choicest of game fish, such as the trout, the shell-cracker, the bream, the stump-knocker (a small perch), to say nothing of the black-fish, catfish and several species of turtles.

## Like Garden of Eden.

Upon its banks grow many varieties of trees, the cypress, tupelo, juniper, pine, hickory, beech, magnolia, ash, walnut and cedar, interspersed with the dogwood, with its white flowers; the redbird, with its gorgeous pink blossoms; the sweetshrub and the honeysuckle so beautiful and fragrant, and the Cherokee rose, the loveliest of wild flowers. These, with pleasant recollections of the mint julep engendered by the aroma from many beds of mint, scattered along the banks, almost persuade one to believe that the Garden of Eden was located here. In these woods game is abundant, such as the turkey, squirrel, quail, coon and opossum, while ducks of all varieties find winter homes upon the bosom of the stream.

The stream is well adapted for com-

mercial use; for, located upon it is Merritt's mill, where for years corn has been ground into meal, timber sawn into lumber and seed cotton converted into lint; abundant water power being found to operate machinery for these purposes and many others not yet attempted. Thousands of logs have been and still are annually floated down this stream on the way to market. These enterprises were so remunerative that the mind of one of our most successful business men conceived the idea of utilizing the spring and I shall now, with sadness, proceed to relate the simple but tragic history of this undertaking.

## A Tragic Story.

It is not known until this day how the spring became aware of the business man's purpose. It is thought that the wind whispered the secret to her, while on a moonlight visit. She, who from Creation's dawn had remained unmolested, now conceived the idea that her privilege—the privilege of being beautiful—was about to be invaded, and that she would be forced to do menial service, which would not only mar her beauty, but degrade her to the level of an ordinary water course. She could not endure the thought of adding an artificial growth, and sitting by the side of a great wheel, turning it all the day long and far into the night. She rebelled at the thought of such desecration and resolutely determined not to submit. The scold hand of commerce might mar, but it should not forever destroy the beauty and wild freedom of this romantic spring.

At great expense a building was erected for the mill; the miller's house arose among the oaks; a dam was constructed a few yards below and the Spirit of Commerce gloated over the prospect of its almost brutal conquest of the fairest and loveliest spring in all Florida. An immense undershot wheel was put in position, the breach in the dam was closed and the Spirit of Commerce took his stand by the side of the waters, awaiting the moment when the clear and limpid element should rise to a sufficient height to do the menial service of turning the great wheel.

The energetic and usually farsighted business man whose brain conceived the plan took his place near the mill, and awaited the event which, though it destroyed the romance surrounding the spring, would add to his commercial enterprises another great source of income. The breach was closed, the waters poured forth with their accustomed vigor for a few hours, and

then the flow began to decline. The waters which before, from time immemorial, had been free, which in their wild freedom had danced and sparkled in the sunshine, humming low melodies, clear as crystal, cold as an Arctic river, now refused to do the work appointed by the Spirit of Commerce.

## A Singular Phenomenon.

The Spirit of the Spring laid her hand upon the opening and said to the waters: "Come not forth," and they obeyed gladly. She furnished other outlets for some, drove others back into the bowels of the earth, filling surface wells on neighboring plantations, supplying waters for new springs and lakes never before heard of, but refusing absolutely to supply the power requisite for the great wheel. The waters of the spring ceased to flow, they assumed a lifeless appearance, the long green moss settled upon the bottom gasping for breath, a dark green substance rose to the surface and like a thick veil hid the waters from view.

It was as though the spring had gone into mourning, and to the writer who, from boyhood, had almost daily held communion with the Spirit of the Spring, these habitations of mourning so assumed, were not inappropriate. She mourned and would not be comforted, but she consistently refused to do the work assigned. The great wheel and the mill house, which marred the beauty of the spring and had brought about all the trouble, remained idle and vacant, and the Spirit of Commerce, try though he did, could neither coax nor drive.

## Spirit of Commerce Defeated.

At last the great wheel rolled away, the dam began to break, the Spirit of Commerce was beaten. The Spirit of the Spring came forth and removed the dark veil that so long had covered the face of the waters, the waters began to dance and sparkle and sing as of yore; the long moss, now a dull lead color and lifeless, rose from the bottom, assumed its accustomed hue, waving its long arms in gladness and joy, now rising to the surface to be kissed by the sunbeams and caressed by the breezes, now falling to the bottom, forming momentary hiding places for the fishes and the turtles.

The Spirit of Commerce unwillingly departed, leaving behind the wreck of the mill, the dam and the wheel, but his unwelcome visit had changed the mild character and gentle nature of the spring. Before the visit she was peaceful, mild and gentle, as well as beautiful. Her face was a mirror into which the sun peered and the moon peeped in their daily rounds. No sound save soft music issued from the water; it entertained no animosity to man, beast or fowl; all were invited to freely partake of its icy coldness, to bathe in it at will, without fear of harm.

But the doings of commerce hardened the heart of the Spirit of the Spring. She caused its waters to dig deep holes where their passage was obstructed. These she filled with the choicest of the crystal waters. The bottoms were washed as white as snow, no moss was permitted to grow there. Each was an optical delusion, so constructed, that appearing to be shallow and small and harmless, they yet were deep and wide and treacherous and cold.

Woe to the heedless one who, tempted by appearances, enters one of these seductive places for a bath. Better heed the warnings which the angry waters—angry because obstructed by the remains of the dam—continually thunder forth to the unwary, for the icy coldness of these beautiful waters will chill the blood, and the Spectre of Death will rise from the spring as it has risen, since the Spirit of Commerce hardened the heart of the Spirit of the Spring.

## COURTESIES ACKNOWLEDGED

The Journal desires to express its appreciation of the many courtesies extended to its representatives while in Marianna, by Mr. W. H. Milton, vice president and cashier of the First National Bank of Marianna, and Mr. J. D. Smith, president of the Citizens State Bank of Marianna.

To both of these gentlemen is due partial credit for the success of this special edition of Marianna and Jackson county. They were unflinching in their efforts to facilitate matters and set aside their personal business matters to furnish the representatives with data, photographs and such information as was within their knowledge.

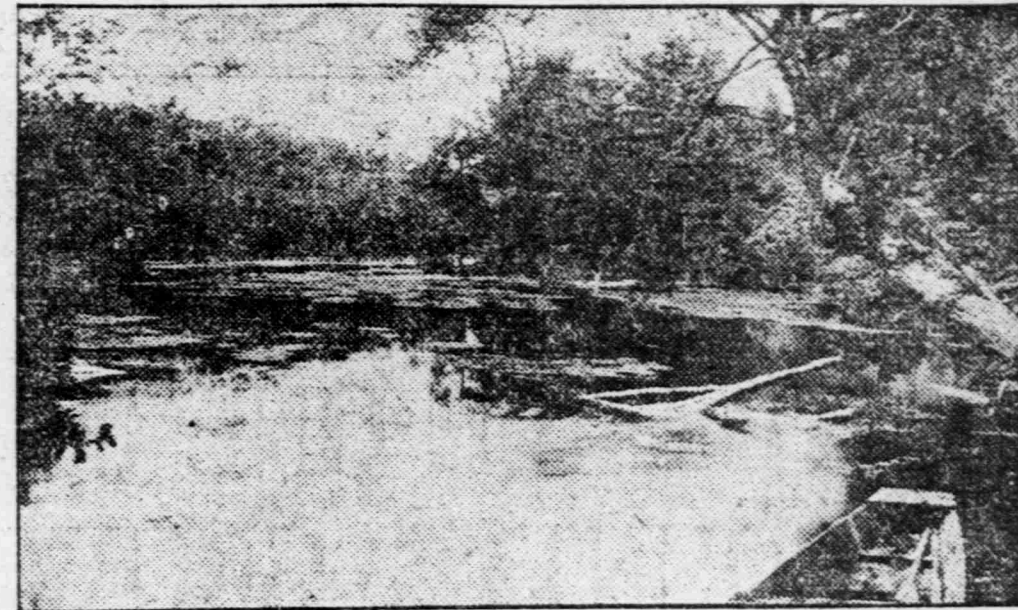
Messrs. Milton and Smith are public spirited men with the interest of Marianna and the surrounding country well at heart, and it is an illustration of the spirit that permeates every man, woman and child in this delightful city, i.e., Marianna first, last and all the time.

## LEADING CITIZEN OF MARIANNA

Mr. M. L. Dekle, one of Marianna's most prominent citizens, has spent the greater portion of his life in the development and upbuilding of this thriving city of West Florida.

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From that year up to 1902 his business steadily increased, when he retired from the general mercantile business to look after his many other interests throughout Jackson county.



Lower Spring, at the "Long Moss," or Blue Spring, Near Marianna, Fla.



Home of Mr. M. L. Dekle, Marianna, Fla.

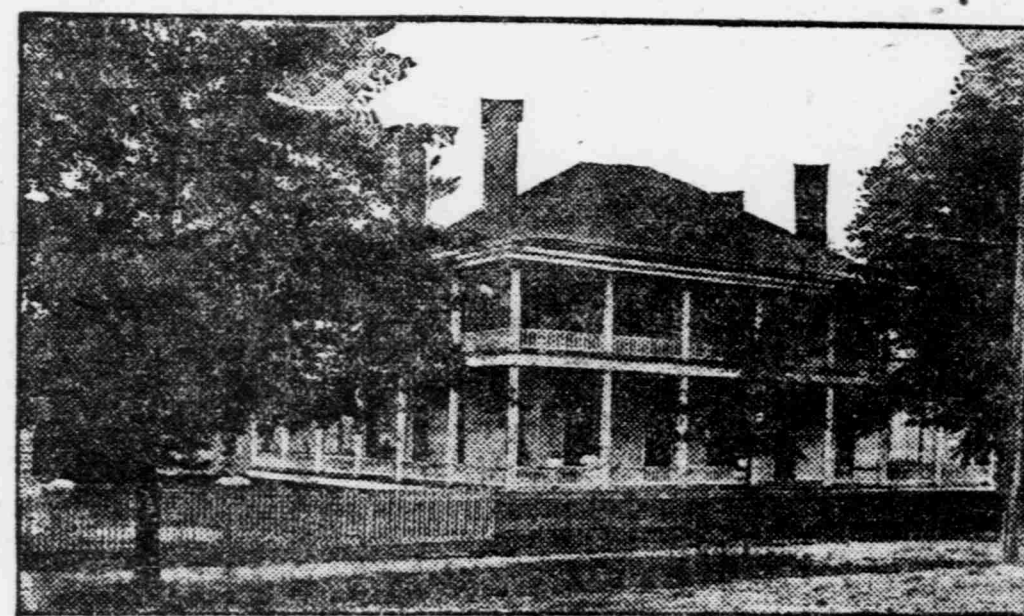
Mr. Dekle is president of the First National Bank of Marianna, a member of the board of directors of the Marianna Manufacturing Company, a member of the board of commissioners of the State Reform School, and has been a member of the city council, continuously, since its organization up to the present time.

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